

## **This Month's Feature..... It's Berry Season**

Strawberries are here and Blueberries are close behind! No other state can compare when these two crops come in. We have some of the sweetest and juiciest berries around.

Check out the Farm Fresh link below to find the Pick-your-own farms listed by county. These farmers usually have berries already picked that you can purchase as well but if you have the time, I suggest picking a few for fun. That's a great sound when you pop that berry off and they are so sweet and warm straight from the field. You will also see plenty of roadside stands this time of year. Or you can visit any of the Farmers Markets across the state. So hurry up and get picking because it's berry season in North Carolina!

### **Strawberry Pretzel Cake**

1 large box strawberry gelatin  
2 cups boiling water  
3 cups chopped NC strawberries  
3/4-cup margarine (melted)  
3 tablespoons brown sugar  
2 1/2 cups chopped pretzels  
1 8oz cream cheese  
2 cups sugar  
1 9oz cool whip

#### **Top Layer**

Pour the boiling water over the strawberry gelatin and stir 1-2 minutes until dissolved. Add the chopped strawberries, set aside to thicken. Pour this onto your cream cheese mixture.

#### **Middle Layer**

Cream together the cream cheese and sugar. Stir in the cool whip. Spread onto bottom layer (pretzel layer) that is cool.

#### **Bottom Layer**

Chop pretzels or pulse in a food processor until 1/2 - 1 inch in length. Mix margarine, brown sugar & pretzels together. Press into a 9x13 inch-baking dish, bake at 350 for 5 to 10 minutes. Let cool.

Place in refrigerator until set, 4-8 hours. Keep in refrigerator until ready to serve.

**PERSONAL Note:** This is a very old fashioned dessert. It was given to my sister 18 years ago. I love this because it is so different and the salty pretzel with the sweet strawberry is just delicious!

## **Smashing Blueberry Loaf with Blueberry Butter**

1/2-cup butter

1-cup sugar

2 eggs

2 cups fresh NC blueberries, pureed with one tablespoon water

1 teaspoon lemon juice

2 cups flour

3 tablespoons baking powder

1/4-teaspoon salt

3/4-cup fresh NC blueberries

Cream butter and sugar until well blended. Add eggs one at the time, beat until light. Add pureed blueberries and lemon juice to cream mixture. Sift flour, baking powder and salt. Add to blueberry mixture. Add 3/4-cup whole blueberries to the mixture. Bake in 2 greased loaf pan at 375F for approximately 45 minutes.

### **Blueberry Butter**

2 sticks unsalted butter (softened)

1 cup fresh NC Blueberries (pureed)

1/4 cup honey

2 Tablespoons brown sugar

1 teaspoon lemon juice

Combine all ingredients in a food processor until blended.

PERSONAL Note: I can't even tell you how good this bread is warm with this blueberry butter. Well I can, it was so good I ate 2 pieces as soon as it came out of the oven.

### **Strawberry Mini-cakes**

1 box yellow cake mix  
4 large eggs  
¾ cup vegetable oil  
3 oz packet of strawberry Jell-o  
4 cups confectioner's sugar  
2 Tablespoons strawberry Kool-Aid  
1-cup water  
½ cup finely chopped NC Strawberries  
3 Tablespoons vegetable oil

Spray miniature muffin tins with cooking spray. Combine the cake mix, eggs, vegetable oil and strawberry Jell-o with an electric mixer until smooth. Spoon batter into muffin tins filling each muffin tin half way. Bake for 12 minutes. Turn out onto a cloth or cooling rack.

While cakes are cooling, make your icing. Mix the Kool-Aid with 1 cup of water. Add to the confectionary sugar. Add oil and strawberries. Stir until smooth.

Dip the top of each cake into the icing or drizzle with the glaze. Let glaze set.

PERSONAL Note: If you were serving these at a party, I would garnish each one with a slice of strawberry and a sprig of fresh mint.

### **Six Cup Strawberry Salad**

1 cup NC Strawberries, diced  
1 cup pineapple tidbits, drained  
1-cup miniature marshmallows  
1-cup coconut, frozen or canned  
2 cups Cool Whip

Combine all ingredients. Refrigerate for 8 hours.

PERSONAL Note: This is so easy and a great side dish. It would also be delicious with the addition of 1 cup of NC pecans.

### **Blueberry Salad**

1 can blueberry pie filling  
2 packets grape Jell-O  
1 small can crushed pineapple, drained  
2 cups hot water

1 8oz. package of cream cheese  
½ cup sour cream  
¼ cup sugar

Mix the first four ingredients and pour into a 9X13 dish. Put in the refrigerator to set up.

Blend cream cheese, sour cream and sugar. Spread mixture evenly on top of blueberry mixture.

Top with fresh NC blueberries

PERSONAL Note: You can also use cherry pie filling and cherry Jell-O in place of the blueberry pie filling and grape Jello-O.

### **Blueberry sauce with onion and tomatoes**

2 Tablespoons butter  
2 medium onions, sliced  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon pepper  
2 Tablespoons sugar  
¼ cup red wine  
2 Tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
1-cup fresh or frozen NC blueberries  
1 cup grape tomatoes, quartered  
1 Tablespoon fresh Rosemary  
2 Tablespoons fresh Parsley

Fix your favorite pork. Pork Chops, Pork Tenderloin, or Pork Roast.

In a skillet over medium-high heat, melt 2 tablespoons of butter. Add onions, salt and pepper; cook until onions are golden, about 10 minutes. Add sugar; cook until onions are caramelized, 3 minutes longer. Add the wine, balsamic vinegar, blueberries, tomatoes and herbs and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and serve with the pork

PERSONAL Note: This smells delicious while it is cooking. I have also made this substituting the blueberries with a medium NC apple that has been peeled and diced and using cilantro in place of the rosemary.

### **Red, White and Blue Salad**

Mixed salad greens  
½ cup NC blueberries  
½ cup NC strawberries  
¼ cup feta cheese  
Salt and pepper  
Lemon Poppy Seed Dressing  
Sugar coated pecans

Wash your greens and top with the remaining ingredients.

### **Sugar Coated Pecans**

1 egg white  
1 cup pecan halves  
½ cup sugar  
½ teaspoon salt

Beat one egg white and one tablespoon of cold water together until frothy. Stir in 1 cup of pecan halves into mixture. In another bowl, mix ½ cup of sugar and ½ teaspoon of salt. Stir pecans into sugar mixture until well coated.

Spread nuts on cookie sheet and bake at 275 degrees for 15 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes.

PERSONAL Note: This salad is beautiful for the spring and summer. It also reminds me of July 4<sup>th</sup>. The pecan recipe is also great for pecan pieces to be used as a topping on salads, dessert or yogurt.